

transformative flows that destabilize all identities, *desiring* the self as a process of transformation.

Braidotti's style is itself persuasively affirmative. Her narrative sweeps the reader along at a pace that energizes and demands engagement. There is an intensity that leaves no room for doubt about her belief in the positivity of becoming nomadic; she is not simply playing with ideas.

Although Braidotti writes extensively on the distortions and irrelevance of the ethnocentric worldview, her book could appear, at first reading, to be presenting a politics for the free world. She talks about the post-secular reinvention of god, the return of aggressively polarized sexual difference in fundamentalist and reactionary guises. In place of, or in addition to, the Western model of emancipation, she calls for a plurality of other models, not as cultural relativism but as localized subjectivity. So she certainly sets the scene for non-ethnocentrism. But it does beg the question: how would this manifest in the most repressive of regimes? How are people to constantly reinvent their identity within systems that deny them an identity to start with?

That said, this is a book of far-reaching positivity and clarity. Braidotti's language is breathtaking; her scope all-encompassing. Her final 'secular prayer' can stand alone in its compassionate call for us not to forget that we are 'enfleshed entities ... immersed in the full intensity and luminosity of becoming' (p. 364).

Reference

Braidotti, R. (2014). The First Supper Symposium: 'Punk women and riot girls'. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5J1z-E8u60>.

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Mindful and existential

Mindful counselling and psychotherapy: practising mindfully across approaches and issues, by Meg John Barker, London, Sage, 2013, 216 pp., £18.62 (paperback), ISBN 978-1446211113

Reviewed by Nadia Perez, counsellor and Zen practitioner

Mindfulness has become a new buzzword not only in therapeutic circles but in Twitter feeds, corporate coaching strap lines, meditation courses, self-help sections in book shops. I've seen it described as the new corporate buzzword for yoga, a way to find peace in a frantic world, the key to awareness. As a trainee integrative psychotherapist I have to ask myself, what does it mean to me and how can I use it as a tool in my own practice?

With so many courses and so much literature jumping on the mindfulness bandwagon, it is difficult to know which books to choose that can answer some of the questions about mindfulness that a trainee like me might have. So when I was

asked to write a review of this book, I was looking forward to gaining some more insight into this practice, and hopefully a better understanding of what it means and how to implement it into my practice.

The book is aimed at students and more experienced therapists, and covers how to practise mindfully across approaches and issues. I started the book thinking to myself, okay, I'm going to try and read this mindfully, without really knowing what that meant, so it was fortunate that the first chapter actually assists the reader by inviting them to bracket any labels or preconceived ideas about mindfulness, and to reflect on how and why they are reading this book. I realized then that I had to put aside my philological background and read it as a trainee therapist, whose review may influence others to choose this book to add to their collection. Consequentially, I have to paradoxically let go of the non-judgemental stance I have been nurturing so carefully these past few years.

The introduction reminds us that mindfulness is a Buddhist practice, and explains how much it has influenced Western thought in terms of philosophy and modern psychology. It invites the reader to reflect and meditate on the information that is being put forward. As a trainee or as a beginner, I found this serves as a reminder of previously acquired knowledge, but more experienced therapists might find this condescending or obvious.

Part I is divided into chapters, and goes into more detail on how mindfulness can be applied in different theoretical approaches, covering how it can be used as a tool for the client to enable awareness, as well as the therapist to improve presence and self-care, as well as outlining particular techniques. There are several case studies that invite you to reflect on how you could work mindfully in different client situations. Although some might find hypothetical case studies useful, I thought it would have been more useful to be invited to think about my own client work, or an actual case study that has shown how mindfulness was applied to improve the therapeutic relationship. Part I ends with a chapter on research, which can be helpful to those planning to carry out research on the effectiveness of mindfulness.

The second part of the book seems to take on a more existential approach as the chapters focus on general issues, covering depression, stress and anxiety, psychosis, relationships and so on. I say 'existential' because at this point I found it hard to distinguish between 'being mindful' and an existential approach. I did find this part of the book more attractive: it challenged me to think about the many ways in which I can bracket my assumptions, and how to invite clients to step away from societal pressures and find meaning for themselves.

The book is well researched and covers a lot of – perhaps too much – ground. I sometimes felt that it was trying too hard to convince the reader that mindfulness can be used for everything and anything, like those articles you read in health magazines about the latest super food. I would certainly use it a reference book to dip into every now and then, particularly as I am still in training. I also liked the meditation techniques that come with pictures. I am relatively new to meditation, and have found it indispensable when I catch myself trying too hard. Which is something that I discovered about myself while reading this book – that trying too hard to be aware too much all the time is counterproductive, and that being unaware is okay too, because processing takes time.